



**Robyn Collins**  
**General Manager**



For RSL DefenceCare, 2017 has already seen some changes.

In January RSL DefenceCare transferred its WA operations to RSLWA, to help the RSL achieve its goals of rebuilding Perth's ANZAC House and providing a revised model of advocacy and welfare support and services throughout WA.

RSLWA is in the process of seeking tax deductible status and, as such, is ensuring it has direct day-to-day coordination of its advocacy and welfare services to sub-Branches and other serving and ex-service members as part of the RSL's Australia-wide family.

RSL DefenceCare will continue to offer support and assistance to the team in WA and we hope that in our time in WA, we have made a contribution to RSL WA's goals.

In NSW, changing claims and welfare practices in the ADF have meant that the original trust deed for RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution (trading as RSL DefenceCare) no longer adequately meets the needs of Defence families in times of injury, illness and crisis. Late last year we received advice recommending that a new charity and public benevolent institution should be set up to better meet the changing needs of Defence members

and their families, and we are now undertaking the tasks that will help us transition our organisation.

The new charity will be called RSL DefenceCare Limited and we hope that it will start operating later this year (RSL WBI will engage the new organisation to deliver its services.) Whilst not a lot will change in our services, we will keep you up-to-date with our progress.

You may recall RSL DefenceCare took over responsibility for the ANZAC and Poppy Appeals in mid-2016. The Appeals are vital fundraising initiatives that support sub-Branches in the delivery of their local welfare support as well as the services provided by RSL DefenceCare. It is important that we try to make them as successful as possible.

Together with RSL NSW, we are currently conducting a review of both the Appeals and Shops and we anticipate that any recommendations will be finalised by March 2017. Our sincere appreciation to all those who have provided feedback or offered comments – all are of value.

In the meantime, we wish you well for the 2017 ANZAC Appeal and thank you in advance for your contribution.

RSL DefenceCare remains committed to helping current and ex-serving men and women of the Australian Defence Force and their families in times of injury, illness and crisis. Although we are a separate legal entity from RSL NSW, all RSL NSW members are welcome to call RSL DefenceCare if they find themselves

in crisis, needing assistance with claims and advocacy, counselling, financial assistance and referrals to other services. Our services also extend to family members of veterans and this includes members of Women's Auxiliaries.

## PEOPLE WE HAVE HELPED

### An Army Trooper's family in distress...

Melinda's father Peter served in Australian Army, A & B Squadron and the 3rd Cavalry Regiment. His classification was Trooper but he drove APC's (Tanks).

Peter's stepfather was in the Army in his younger days and was a member of the Rats of Tobruk. Melinda believes that this was her father's inspiration to join the Army - to make his father proud and serve his country.

Peter and his wife married in June 1970 – he was 21 and she was 19. By November of the same year he was posted to Vietnam. Peter and his bride wrote to each other every week. He drew loads of pictures of Snoopy and other "Peanuts" characters of the time and tried to make light of his struggles facing combat. To this day his family have a scrapbook filled with their correspondence.

Like many veterans, Peter didn't talk



## CONTACT US

RSL DefenceCare is a charity helping current and ex-serving members of the ADF and their families in times of injury, illness and crisis. RSL DefenceCare is part of RSL Welfare and Benevolent Institution and is a Tier 1 RSL NSW

recognised charity. ABN: 61 603 206 488. DGR: 752 766 491. CFN: 12317.

If you would like to discuss how RSL DefenceCare can assist you and your family, please contact us.  
ANZAC House, 245 Castlereagh St,  
Sydney NSW 2000

Ph: 8088 0388 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm).

Fax: 9261 4558

Email: [defencecare@rslnsw.org.au](mailto:defencecare@rslnsw.org.au)

Website: [www.defencecare.org.au](http://www.defencecare.org.au)

Facebook: DefenceCare

Twitter: DefenceCare

Instagram: DefenceCare

too much about his time in Vietnam. He said that ‘people who go to war don’t talk about it’. He did mention however, that what terrified the soldiers the most, was not knowing where the enemy was or who they were.

“My sister and I were fortunate enough to meet some of Dad’s colleagues from 3rd Cavalry Regiment at a memorial opening in Tongala, Victoria, a few years ago,” said Melinda. “It was wonderful to see so many families as proud of their father/husband/brother’s contribution as we are.”

Peter was brought back to the civilian world straight from a war zone in the middle of the night and without debriefing.

“While this was an amazingly happy time for all concerned, Dad did struggle trying to settle back into normality. Dad battled his demons for all of our lives, alcohol being his vice. He became a train driver and loved his job dearly. Unfortunately, his PTSD became too much to cope with and he had to leave this job to pursue a different career path. He had various jobs after this, but always struggled with his demons.

“Our Mum was our Dad’s world. Sadly, she lost her battle with breast cancer at the young age of 54. This was devastating for all our family, but most of all for Dad - his heart was broken and he became desperately lonely.

“Dad tried to keep busy and went on a few overseas trips to Vietnam and the UK. He found great comfort in going back to Vietnam, but ultimately, nothing filled the void of losing the love of his life and the only person who shared and could deal with his PTSD unconditionally.

“As children, we didn’t understand our father’s struggles. As adults, however, we understood and tried to provide the unconditional love and support he needed. We gave until we had nothing left to give and then somehow found more strength to continue. Unfortunately, after years of alcohol abuse as a result

of PTSD, Dad lost his fight and died of advanced liver disease.”

When Peter was advised by doctors that he would not survive, it was suggested that he get his affairs in order.

“Dad was convinced the cost of his funeral was completely covered by Department of Veterans’ Affairs so did not take out any form of funeral insurance or put away funds to cover costs. Unfortunately, Dad was mistaken; there was no death benefit payable. Our family was left to pay the cost.

“We found this extremely hard – both organising the funeral and finding thousands of dollars to pay for it. In the end, I used redraw facilities from my mortgages and credit cards to cover the cost.

“I wrote to RSL NSW and within a few days, received a telephone call from RSL DefenceCare and assistance with the cost of Dad’s funeral. It was nothing short of amazing and really took the pressure off our family. We were able to start to breathe again.

“We then heard back from the DVA not long after our dealings with RSL DefenceCare, advising they too were going to assist with funeral costs - by some miracle, Dad’s words rang true and his funeral costs really were partially covered.”

“RSL DefenceCare is nothing short of AMAZING! They were there to support our family when we needed it. They were willing to help, care and respect our father’s memory as well as our grieving family. Thank you seems insignificant when trying to express how much gratitude we, as a family, feel for this organisation.”

## ANZAC APPEAL 2017

In 2016 we sincerely valued your contribution to the ANZAC and Poppy Appeals. Your fundraising efforts helped RSL sub-Branched provide vital local welfare support and RSL DefenceCare to provide services to current and ex-serving ADF members and their families.

Together we raised a total of \$1,180,461 during the ANZAC Appeal. In 2017, we are trying to increase our total raised to \$1.5m to meet the growing demands for help within the Defence community in NSW.

This year’s ANZAC Appeal will run from Monday 27 March to Thursday 27 April and we hope you will join with us in supporting this important event.

## RSL DEFENCECARE STAFF UPDATE

Given the nature of the work RSL DefenceCare does, it is important for our team to be qualified and continue to update their qualifications. We thought we would provide the following updated information on our staff.

RSL DefenceCare’s team includes:

- 11 with tertiary qualifications, five with counselling/social work and two with Certificate 4 in Workplace Training & Assessment;
- 10 who have completed TIP’s Basic Tri-legislation course;
- 4 who have completed TIP’s Level 2 Tri-legislation course;
- 3 who have completed TIP’s Level 3 Advocate course;
- 1 who has completed TIP’s Level 4 Advocate course;
- 2 who have completed TIP’s War Widows course;
- 2 who have completed TIP Welfare Level 1 course and two, Level 2;
- 10 who have completed a Mental Health First Aid course;
- 7 who have completed Suicide Awareness training;
- 9 who have completed Accidental Counselling;
- 11 who have completed training in Vicarious Trauma; and
- 11 who have completed Trauma Informed Care training.

RSL DefenceCare also has a number of staff who have completed various online TIP courses.